

# **Peer Review Plan for Beach Layia Species Status Assessment (SSA) Report**

## **About the Document**

**Title:** Draft Species Status Assessment Report for Beach layia (*Layia carnosa*)

**Timeline of Peer Review:** March 26, 2018 - April 8, 2018

**Determination Regarding Species' Status:** This report will inform a decision on whether the federally endangered beach layia warrants reclassification under the Endangered Species Act. This decision is expected approximately by September 2018. If we determine that the species warrants reclassification, we will publish a proposed rule with appropriate opportunities for public review and comment.

## **About the Peer Review Process**

In accordance with our July 1, 1994 peer review policy (59 FR 34270), the Service's August 22, 2016 Director's Memo on the Peer Review Process, and the Office of Management and Budget's December 16, 2004 Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review, we, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) will solicit independent scientific reviews of the information contained in our SSA Report for beach layia. The purpose of seeking independent peer review is to ensure use of the best scientific and commercial information available and to ensure and to maximize the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of the information upon which the report is based, as well as to ensure that reviews by recognized experts are incorporated into the SSA process.

We requested peer review from seven independent experts, and considered the following criteria.

- **Expertise:** Reviewers knowledge of or experience with the beach layia or similar species biology, California coastal ecosystems, or threats (such as but not limited to changes in climate conditions).
- **Independence:** Reviewers had sufficient independence from the Service.
- **Objectivity:** Reviewers were recommended as options because they were considered to be objective, open-minded, and thoughtful.
- **Conflict of Interest:** Reviewers did not have any financial or other interest that conflicts or that could impair their objectivity or create an unfair competitive advantage. If an otherwise qualified reviewer has an unavoidable conflict of interest, we may publicly disclose the conflict.

While expertise is the primary consideration, we selected peer reviewers that add to a diversity of scientific perspectives relevant to the SSA Report for beach layia. No financial compensation was provided to the peer reviewers. We also solicited reviews from the required minimum of at least three qualified experts.

We provided each peer reviewer with information explaining their role and instructions for fulfilling that role, the SSA Report, and a conflict of interest form. Peer reviewers were asked to comment on:

- the quality of the scientific information and analyses and whether the best available information was used or relied on in the document;
- oversights, omissions, and inconsistencies;
- advice on reasonableness of judgments made from the scientific evidence;
- identification and characterization of uncertainties;
- advice on the overall strengths and limitations of the scientific data used in the document;
- information related to any scientific information that we may have not used.

Peer reviewers were requested to provide individual, written responses to us. Peer reviewers were advised that their reviews, including their names and affiliations, will: (1) be included in the decisional record of our determinations regarding this species' status (i.e., final rules or withdrawals); and, (2) be available to the public upon request once all reviews are completed. After receipt, we summarize and respond to the issues raised by the peer reviewers in the record supporting our determinations. A decision on whether or not beach layia warrants reclassification under the Endangered Species Act is expected approximately September 2018.

### **About Public Participation**

This peer review plan is made available to allow the public to monitor our compliance with the Office of Management and Budget's Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review. The SSA Report along with the final decision document will be made available to the public through a news release, direct mail to interested parties, and posts on Service websites (with solicitations for public comment if we prepare a proposed rule). If appropriate, we will publish a final rule following consideration of all comments received from the public.

### **Contact**

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